

REMARKS

Claims 1-23 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1, 3 and 17 are amended, and claims 21-23 are added.

Claims 1 and 3 are amended to more clearly distinguish over the applied references by reciting that the filter body and the seal member are separate members, and that the peripheral edge portion of the filter body is a flange. These amendments are supported throughout the specification of this application. Claim 17 is amended to correct an obvious typographical error therein. New independent claim 21 corresponds to original claim 1 further amended to recite that the seal member has inner and outer peripheral surfaces, and that the semi-melted fibers are fused to the inner and outer peripheral surfaces of the seal member. Support for these additions can be found in the specification at, for example, Fig. 2 (surfaces 21e and 21f), page 3, lines 23-25, page 3, lines 29-30 and page 5, lines 4-7. Claims 22 and 23 correspond to dependent claims 8 and 10, respectively, rewritten in independent form. Thus, no new matter is added by the above amendments.

Applicant notes with appreciation the allowance of claims 11-20. Applicant also notes with appreciation the identification of allowable subject matter in claims 8 and 10. As noted above, claims 22 and 23 correspond to original claims 8 and 10, respectively, rewritten in independent form.

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,379,438 to Schneider et al., and under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) over WO 00/18489, which is from the same patent family as Schneider et al. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Neither the U.S. version nor the PCT version of Schneider et al. discloses or suggests a filter body having a peripheral edge portion that is a flange, and to which a seal member is fused, as recited in amended independent claim 1. In Schneider et al., end band 5 (which the Office Action analogizes to the claimed seal member) is attached to end fold 4 of filter

element 1 in subarea 7. See, for example, col. 3, lines 16-35 of the U.S. patent to Schneider et al. Subarea 7 of end fold 4 is not a flange. In Schneider et al., side band 5 is merely engaged with a side surface of the filter body. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 1 and its dependent claim 2 are patentable over the Schneider et al. references. Withdrawal of the rejections based upon the Schneider et al. references is requested.

Applicant also submits that independent claim 21 is patentable over the Schneider et al. references because the filter body of Schneider et al. only engages the inner peripheral surface of side band 5. Thus, the Schneider et al. references do not disclose or suggest semi-melted fibers of a filter body that are fused to the inner and outer peripheral surfaces of a seal member as recited in independent claim 21.

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,674,302 to Nakayama et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Nakayama et al. does not disclose or suggest a filter body and a seal member that are separate members, with the seal member being fused to a peripheral edge portion of the filter body, the peripheral edge portion being a flange as recited in amended independent claim 1. Flange portion 140 of Nakayama et al. (which the Office Action analogizes to the claimed seal member) is an integral part of the filter body, not a separate member from the filter body. Thus, while element 140 of Nakayama et al. is a flange of the filter body (as described by Nakayama et al. at, for example, col. 10, lines 6-14), it is not a seal member fused to a flange of the filter body as recited in amended claim 1. In Figs. 19A-20, Nakayama et al. discloses a rubber seal member 200 or a felt fiber layer 210 attached to the flange 140 of the filter body. Also see col. 10, lines 28-58. However, Nakayama et al. does not disclose or suggest that elements 200 or 210 are fused to the flange 140 by being fused to fibers that form the filter body when the fibers are in a semi-melted state. Thus, Nakayama et al. does not disclose or

suggest all features recited in independent claim 1. Therefore, claims 1 and 2 are patentable over Nakayama et al.

Regarding independent claim 21, Nakayama et al. does not disclose or suggest a seal member having inner and outer peripheral surface, with semi-melted fibers of the filter body being fused to the inner and outer peripheral surfaces of the seal member. Accordingly, independent claim 21 also is patentable over Nakayama et al.

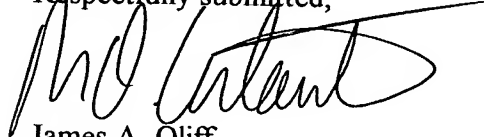
Claims 3-7 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over JP-A-8-38834 in view of Nakayama et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 3 is patentable over the Japanese reference and Nakayama et al. for the same reasons set forth above with respect to independent claim 1. That is, neither reference discloses or suggests a seal member that is a separate member from a filter body and that is fused to a peripheral edge portion of the filter body, the peripheral edge portion being a flange. Withdrawal of the rejection of claims 3-7 and 9 is requested.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment:

Amendment Transmittal

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